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ABSTRACT

Cleveland State University has developed a program to enroll Ohio residents, 60 years and older, on a nontuition and noncredit basis. Volunteers from the Project 60 Program assist in the administrative and program planning, and act as peer advisors during group advising sessions and at registration. A Project 60 student initiated a group called the "Over 60's" to meet the social needs of this population. A questionnaire given to 103 Project 60 students and the faculty showed that a majority of the courses taken were in the arts and sciences (62%), and that most students felt accepted in their classes (89%). Most of the faculty (63%) learned about the program from the students themselves and saw them as contributing positively (58%), competent (48%), well-adjusted (53%), and actively involved in class (48%). They also felt they demonstrated the vitality of older persons to the younger students. (JW)

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PROJECT 60:

Innovative program for older students

By Mary Karger

Cleveland State University is an urban university of 19,000 full and part-time students located in downtown Cleveland. Ninety-eight percent of the student body are commuters. In addition to these credit students, there are about 500 Project 60 students who attend classes on a non-credit, non-tuition basis each year. A mailing list of 700, as of Winter '81 grows each quarter with telephoned requests for information about Project 60.

Project 60 has been in operation for four years. It began with the passage of Amended Senate Bill No. 497 in the Ohio Legislature on May 12, 1976. The Program is based on the premise that "lifelong learning" should be available to every Ohio resident. All the state institutions of higher education in Ohio participate in the Program in some way. The stipulations are as follows:

1. Senior citizens who have resided in Ohio for at least one year are eligible.

2. Enrollment is on a non-tuition, non-credit basis.

3. Registration is on a space-available basis, on the last day of In-Person Registration each quarter.

4. There are no overloads into closed classes.

5. Project 60 students pay no tuition; but, are subject to payment of special fees for particular courses as charged to all students in that course (lab fees, etc.).

People hear about Project 60 from friends or by calling for information about senior citizen programs at CSU. When a prospective student calls, his name is added to a prospective list and a letter is sent to him about the Advising Session for the next quarter. If a person stops in the Office, he completes an application, and has an opportunity to ask some questions in addition to being added to the list of interested students for the following quarter.

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PROJECT 60

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All students are encouraged to attend the Group Advising Sessions rather than to schedule an individual appointment. Students who cannot attend the Group Session due to illness or because they are out of town are given individual appointments. I found that the Group Advising Sessions are the most productive use of my time in providing service to the Project 60 students.

The only Admissions Form for Project 60 is an application which provides a place for information about the student's previous educational background, as well as, information such as social security number and who to notify in case of emergency.

A Project 60 volunteer was recruited to assist in the administrative and program planning on a weekly basis. There are additional volunteers from the Project 60 Program who act as advisors during the Group Advising Sessions and at registration, itself, which is held on the last day of In-Person Registration each quarter.

The advantage of peer counsellors is in their enthusiasm and commitment to making Prject 60 work. They are also familiar with the classes and problems wich other senior students may encounter. Without their dedicated assistance, the Program would not be as successful as it is.

At the Group Advising Session, usually held one month prior to registration for that quarter, students receive a packet of information which includes a course schedule and a worksheet to plan a tentative course. They also receive a course description book, and are encouraged to ask what ever questions they may have about the courses that they would like to take. A typical session lasts from 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. with the majority of the students attending during the first 1½ hours. For Fall 1980, there were over eighty people at the Advising Session! (This does not include the students who already knew what they wanted to take and were familiar with procedures; or, those who were advised either individually before the Session or on the day of registration). There are between six and eight volunteer advisors who assist during the Advising Session.

During the session, students complete their worksheets and ask questions they may have. They take the completed worksheet with them, and return it on the day of registration. Only a few classes have stipulations which the students must meet. Those interested in taking Law courses must receive written permission from the Assistant Dean of the Law School in the form of a signed permission form. The art classes must be registered for on the first day of class rather than on the last day of registration. Students may not overload into a class.

On the day of Registration, from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m., students return with their tentative selection of courses and check in with the volunteer advisors who give them a permit to register. This permit is taken to the Registration Area where students obtain a card for each class in which they wish to enroll. Then they complete the registration process in the ACCESS Office at registration where we fill out the Registrar's portion of the class card and give the student a validation sticker for their student I.D. card.

Students who need advising at registration receive that help, as well as their worksheets from the volunteers and then proceed as above with the permit and class cards. The information about which courses students take and how many students are enrolled each quarter, as well as the Registrar's copy of the permit to register, is turned in and computerized each quarter. A list of enrolled Project 60 students is distributed to the Library and Parking Office each quarter to allow students, access to the library, student parking lots, and other campus facilities.

If the procedure outlined above sounds cut and dried, it is not. Both the Project 60 students and volunteers are an active and interesting group with which to work. In addition to the Project Program there is a social group called the Over 60's who meet once a month. Initiated by a Project 60 student, the Over 60's Group meets the social needs for this population of students who might otherwise gather only during registration each quarter. Very few classes have more than one Project 60 student. Often a professor learns about the Project 60 Program through his first Project 60 student contact.

When ACCESS began administering the Program, as part of the transition, I asked both Project 60 faculty and students to complete a questionnaire. Of the 103 Winter Quarter, 1980, students, there was a 70% response. Forty-two percent of the students were male, 58% were female. The ages ranged from 60 to 89, with the greatest number between 66 and 70 (39%). The majority of courses taken were in the Arts and Sciences (62%). Some students do take Business or Law courses. Most students feel accepted in their classes (89%). The comments made by Project 60 students include:

"Asian Studies sent me to India for three marvelous trips in '76, '77, and '78 and equipped me to be an intelligent tourist and a better citizen of the USA."

"I am here to learn; and, if I accomplish this objective then this is an achievement."

"Thank you for this wonderful second chance. I really appreciate it."

From the Winter Quarter, 1980, faculty, we learned that most of the faculty (63%) learned about the Program from the students themselves. They saw the students as contributing positively (58%), competent (48%), well-adjusted (53%), and actively involved in class (48%). They see the Project 60 students "demonstrate to younger students the vitality of older persons." I personally share their enthusiasm both for the Project 60 students and for the Program.

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